

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L NICOSIA 1998

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, PGOV, CY
SUBJECT: FOREIGN MINISTER REQUESTS U.S. ASSISTANCE WITH EGYPT RE
EL-SABAI KILLERS

REF: A. NICOSIA 1796; (B) CAIRO 17568

1. SUMMARY. FONMIN ROLANDIS REQUESTED U.S. ASSISTANCE WITH EGYPTIANS IN EFFORT REACH AGREEMENT ON HANDLING EL-SABAI KILLERS. I TOLD HIM I THOUGHT SECRETARY ALREADY HAD FULL PLATE IN DEALING WITH EGYPTIANS BUT AGREED TO PASS ON HIS REQUEST. ACTION REQUESTED: RESPONSE WHETHER WE ARE PREPARED APPROACH EGYPTIANS THIS SUBJECT. END SUMMARY.

2. FOLLOWING DINNER IN HIS HONOR AT THE RESIDENCE AUGUST 7, FONMIN ROLANDIS TOLD ME HIS PRINCIPAL CONCERN AT THE MOMENT WAS THE DISPOSITION OF THE EL-SABAI KILLERS. KILLERS' APPEAL WAS REJECTED BY SUPREME COURT, AND THEY ARE NOW SCHEDULED TO BE EXECUTED AUGUST 22. ROLANDIS SAID IT WAS INCONCEIVABLE TO HIM THAT KILLERS WOULD IN FACT BE EXECUTED SINCE ENTIRE TREND IN THE WORLD TODAY WAS AGAINST CAPITAL PUNISHMENT, AND NO EXECUTIONS HAD TAKEN PLACE IN CYPRUS IN THE LAST SIXTEEN YEARS. IN ANSWER TO MY QUESTION, HE ALSO SAID
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GOC HAD BEEN UNDER CONSIDERABLE PRESSURE FROM SOME ARAB STATES TO SPARE KILLERS' LIVES.

3. FONMIN TOLD ME THAT DURING BELGRADE CONFERENCE HE HAD MET TWICE WITH EGYPTIAN DEP FONMIN GHALI TO DISCUSS MATTER; HE CAME AWAY THINKING AGREEMENT HAD BEEN REACHED WHICH WOULD HAVE ENTAILED PRESIDENT KYPRIANOU'S COMMUTING

KILLERS' SENTENCE TO LIFE IMPRISONMENT, TRANSFERRING PRISONERS TO SERVE FIFTEEN-YEAR TERM IN EGYPTIAN JAIL, FOLLOWING WHICH KILLERS WOULD BE DEPORTED FROM EGYPT. AS DAY HAD ELAPSED FOLLOWING AGREEMENT ALONG THESE LINES AND BEFORE GHALI HAD INDICATED SUCH ARRANGEMENT ACCEPTABLE TO HIM, ROLANDIS ASSUMED HE HAD OBTAINED CONCURRENCE HIGHEST EGYPTIAN AUTHORITY. GHALI REPORTEDLY HAD MADE NO RESERVATIONS, BUT ROLANDIS HAD TOLD HIM THAT HE WOULD HAVE TO OBTAIN APPROVAL OF PRESIDENT AND COUNCIL OF MINISTERS AND ALSO ASCERTAIN WHETHER GOC CONSTITUTIONALLY COULD PERMIT CONVICTED KILLERS SERVE THEIR SENTENCE OUTSIDE OF CYPRUS.

4. SUBSEQUENTLY ROLANDIS HAD DETERMINED THAT PROPOSAL WOULD BE ACCEPTABLE TO GOC ONLY TO RECEIVE MESSAGE FROM GHALI INDICATING THAT EGYPTIAN GOVT NOT PREPARED GO THROUGH WITH PROPOSED AGREEMENT. ROLANDIS BELIEVES PRESIDENT SADAT DECIDED TO INSIST THAT KILLERS MUST BE EXECUTED.

5. FONMIN ASKED WHETHER U.S. WOULD BE PREPARED APPROACH EGYPTIANS ON GOC BEHALF WITH REQUEST THAT TWO SIDES MEET TO DISCUSS ISSUE AND ATTEMPT ARRIVE AT SOME UNDERSTANDING. AS TO VENUE, HE SAID THIS COULD BE ATHENS, WHERE ALL COMMUNICATIONS WITH EGYPTIANS ON THIS SUBJECT ARE BEING TRANSMITTED SINCE GOVT OF EGYPT DOES NOT WISH TO DEAL THROUGH THEIR CHARGE IN NICOSIA. PRESIDENT CONFIDENTIAL

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KYPRIANOU IS PRESENTLY IN ATHENS AREA AND COULD BE APPROACHED DIRECTLY THERE. ALTERNATIVELY, FONMIN ROLANDIS WAS PREPARED TO MEET WITH FONMIN KAMIL OR DEP FONMIN GHALI AND GO TO ATHENS OR ANY OTHER POINT SUGGESTED BY EGYPTIANS TO TRY AND ARRIVE AT SOME UNDERSTANDING REGARDING DISPOSITION OF KILLERS.

6. I TOLD ROLANDIS THAT I BELIEVED SECRETARY VANCE ALREADY HAD A VERY FULL AGENDA FOR HIS DISCUSSIONS WITH PRESIDENT SADAT, AND I QUESTIONED WHETHER HE WOULD BE PREPARED RAISE THIS SUBJECT. I AGREED, HOWEVER, TO SOUND OUT THE POSSIBILITY AND DETERMINE WHETHER SECRETARY OR AMBASSADOR EILTS MIGHT BE PREPARED UNDERTAKE MIDDLE-MAN ROLE IN ATTEMPT ARRANGE FOR TWO SIDES MEET ON THIS ISSUE.

7. ROLANDIS INDICATED GOC WAS LIKELY DEFER EXECUTION FOR ADDITIONAL MONTH IN ORDER HAVE MORE TIME WORK OUT ARRANGEMENT WHICH WOULD HOPEFULLY BE SATISFACTORY TO BOTH GOVERNMENTS.

8. ACTION REQUESTED: WOULD MUCH APPRECIATE INDICATION

WHETHER WE ARE PREPARED BE RESPONSIVE TO FONMIN
ROLANDIS' REQUEST.
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